

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 1-23. Please add new claims 24-48, as shown below.

1-23. **[Canceled].**

24. **[New]** A method of performing a package preload operation upon a plurality of packages in accordance with a dispatch plan, wherein each of a plurality of packages has a first shipping label including a label address, said dispatch plan includes an allocation of work for a specified geographical area between and among a plurality of delivery vehicles, each of said delivery vehicles has responsibility for a service area within said geographical area, and each of said delivery vehicles includes a plurality of package load positions, said method comprising:

sending said dispatch plan to a pre-load assist system in an electronic format;

capturing electronically said a destination address from said first shipping label, wherein said destination address is based at least in part on said label address;

assigning a select vehicle from among said delivery vehicles, using said pre-load assist system, wherein said select vehicle is based at least in part on said destination address;

assigning a select load position from among said package load positions, using said pre-load assist system, wherein said select load position is based at least in part on said destination address;

generating a second shipping label that includes a handling instruction, wherein said handling instruction identifies said select vehicle and said select load position;

affixing said second shipping label to said package; and

loading said package in accordance with said handling instruction.

25. **[New]** The method of claim 24, wherein the step of capturing electronically a destination address comprises scanning a symbology on said first shipping label, wherein said label address is encoded within said symbology.

26. [New] The method of claim 24, wherein the step of capturing electronically a destination address comprises scanning a compressed MaxiCode symbology, wherein said label address is encoded within said compressed MaxiCode symbology.

27. [New] The method of claim 24, wherein the step of capturing electronically a destination address comprises interrogating a radio frequency identification tag, wherein said label address is encoded within said tag.

28. [New] The method of claim 24, wherein the step of assigning a select vehicle comprises comparing said destination address to said service area served by one or more of said delivery vehicles.

29. [New] The method of claim 24, wherein the step of assigning a select load position comprises selecting a shelf or shelf position on said select vehicle.

30. [New] The method of claim 24, wherein the step of generating a second shipping label further comprises generating said second shipping label such that it includes a select vehicle identifier, a select load position identifier, and (a) a service level identifier, and/or (b) a commit time.

31 [New] The method of claim 24, wherein the step of affixing said second shipping label comprises providing a label application device that affixes said second shipping label to said package.

32. [New] The method of claim 24, wherein the step of loading said package in accordance with said handling instruction comprises directing said package to one or more sortation belts ultimately destined for said select vehicle.

33. [New] The method of claim 24, further comprising:
passing said destination address from said pre-load assist system to an address validation routine to confirm that said destination address is a valid address.

34. [New] The method of claim 33, further comprising:
prompting a user to review and compare said destination address against said label address printed on said first shipping label if said address validation routine returns an error.

35. [New] A system for performing a package pre-load operation in accordance with a dispatch plan, wherein each of a plurality of packages has a first shipping label including a label address, said dispatch plan includes an allocation of work for a specified geographical area between and among a plurality of delivery vehicles, each of said delivery vehicles has responsibility for a service area within said geographical area, and each of said delivery vehicles includes a plurality of package load positions, said system comprising:

a package scanning device to capture a destination address from said first shipping label, wherein said destination address is based at least in part on said label address;

a pre-load assist tool in electronic communication with said package scanning device that receives said destination address and compares at least said destination address against said dispatch plan to generate a package handling instruction; and

a label generation device that generates a second shipping label that includes said package handling instruction.

36. [New] The system of Claim 35, wherein said package handling instruction identifies a select vehicle assigned from among said plurality of delivery vehicles, wherein said select vehicle is responsible for work performed at said destination address.

37 [New] The system of Claim 36, wherein said package handling instruction identifies one or more sortation belts ultimately destined for said select vehicle.

38. [New] The system of Claim 36, wherein said package handling instruction identifies a select load position assigned from among said plurality of package load positions on said select vehicle.

39. [New] The system of Claim 35, wherein said package scanning device is selected from the group consisting of: a bar-code scanner, a MaxiCode scanner, and a radio frequency identification tag reader.

40. [New] The system of Claim 35, further comprising:
a plurality of sortation belts configured to direct said plurality of packages toward said plurality of delivery vehicles, wherein said package handling instruction identifies one or more of said sortation belts ultimately destined for said select vehicle, such that each of said packages moves toward said select vehicle according to said package handling instruction.

41. [New] The system of Claim 35, further comprising:
a label application device that affixes said second shipping label to said package.

42. [New] The system of Claim 35, further comprising:
a dispatch planning application that generates said dispatch plan and publishes said dispatch plan to said pre-load assist tool.

43. [New] The system of Claim 35, wherein said package scanning device captures said destination address from a compressed MaxiCode symbology, wherein said label address is encoded within said compressed MaxiCode symbology.

44. [New] The system of Claim 35, wherein said package handling instruction is determined by said destination address and (a) a service level identifier, and/or (b) a commit time.

45. [New] The system of Claim 35, further comprising:
an address validation system that receives said destination address and returns an error code if said destination address is not a valid address.

46. [New] The system of Claim 45, wherein said pre-load assist tool prompts a user to compare said destination address against said label address on said first shipping label if said error code is received from said address validation system.

47. [New] The system of Claim 35, further comprising:
an address decompression routine configured to receive said destination address from said package scanning device, decompress any compressed data within said destination address, and return said destination address in a decompressed format to said pre-load assist tool.

48. [New] The system of Claim 35, wherein said pre-load assist tool monitors work allocated to each of said plurality of delivery vehicles.